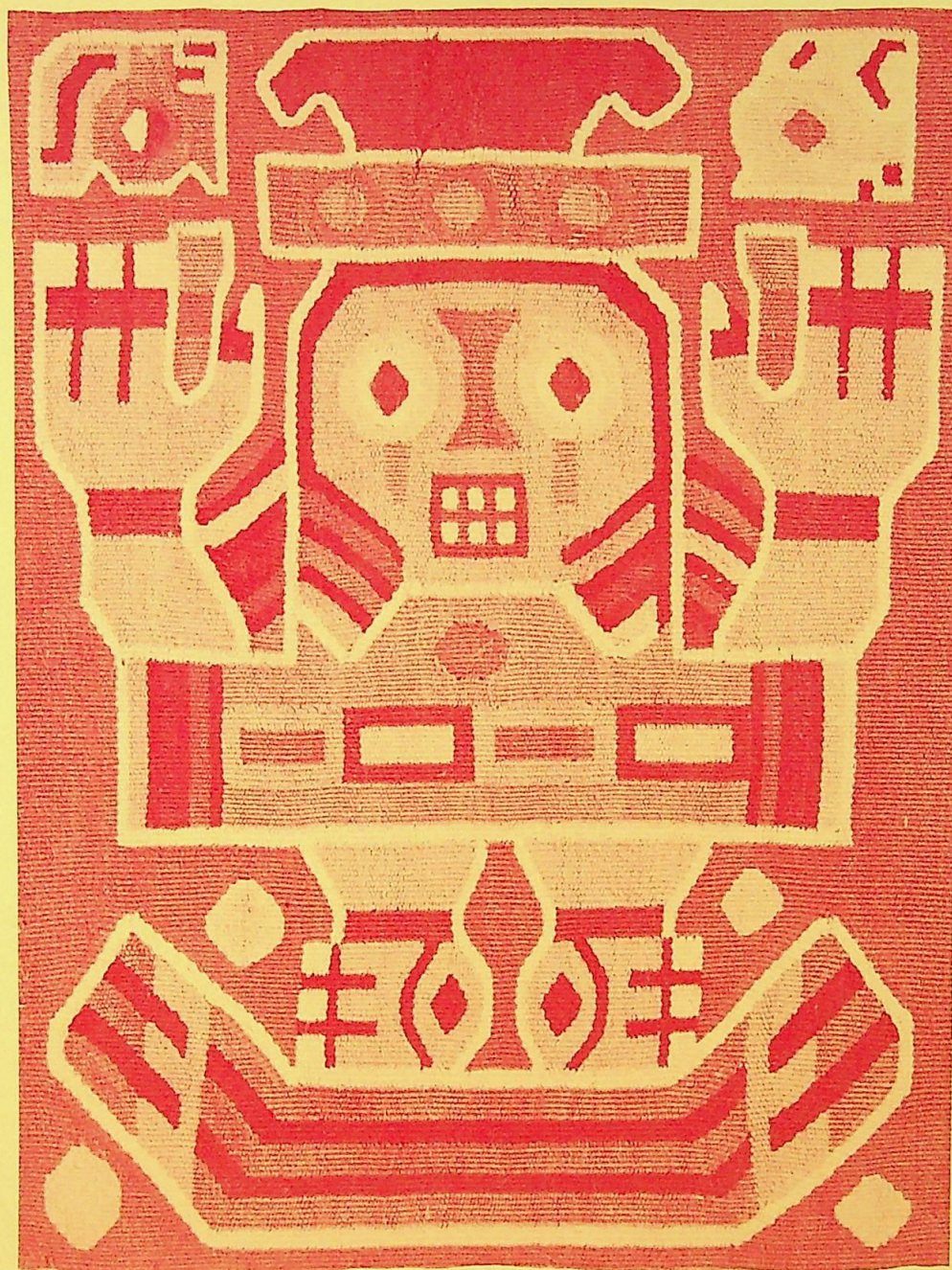
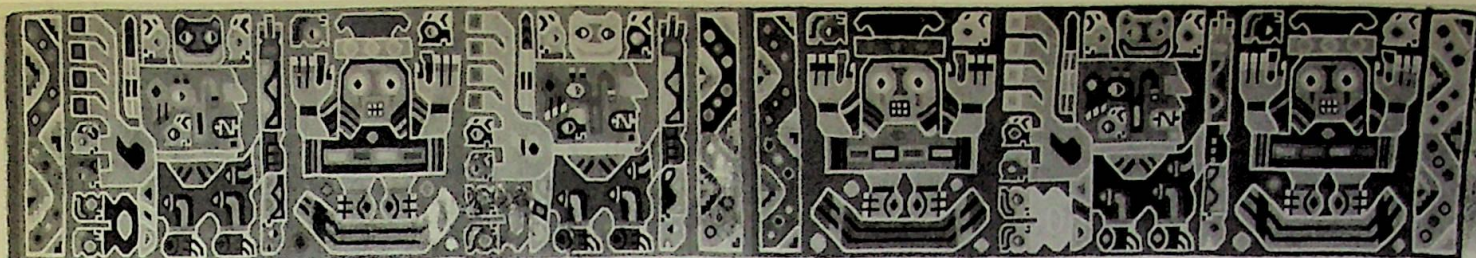


TEXTILE MUSEUM JOURNAL



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COVER: Detail of interlocked tapestry band (illustrated in full above). Alternating winged messengers holding staffs, and frontal human figures standing on balsa rafts (?). Classic Tiahuanaco. Coyungo, Rio Grande Valley, Peru. About A.D. 900. Textile Museum 1965.32.1. On view in the Ancient Peruvian Textiles Exhibition through April 15, 1967.

DRAWINGS by Milton Franklin Sondag, Jr.

PHOTOGRAPHS by Allen C. Marceron and Osmund Leonard Varela, and through the courtesy of Cooper Union Museum, New York, and Montreal Museum of Fine Arts.

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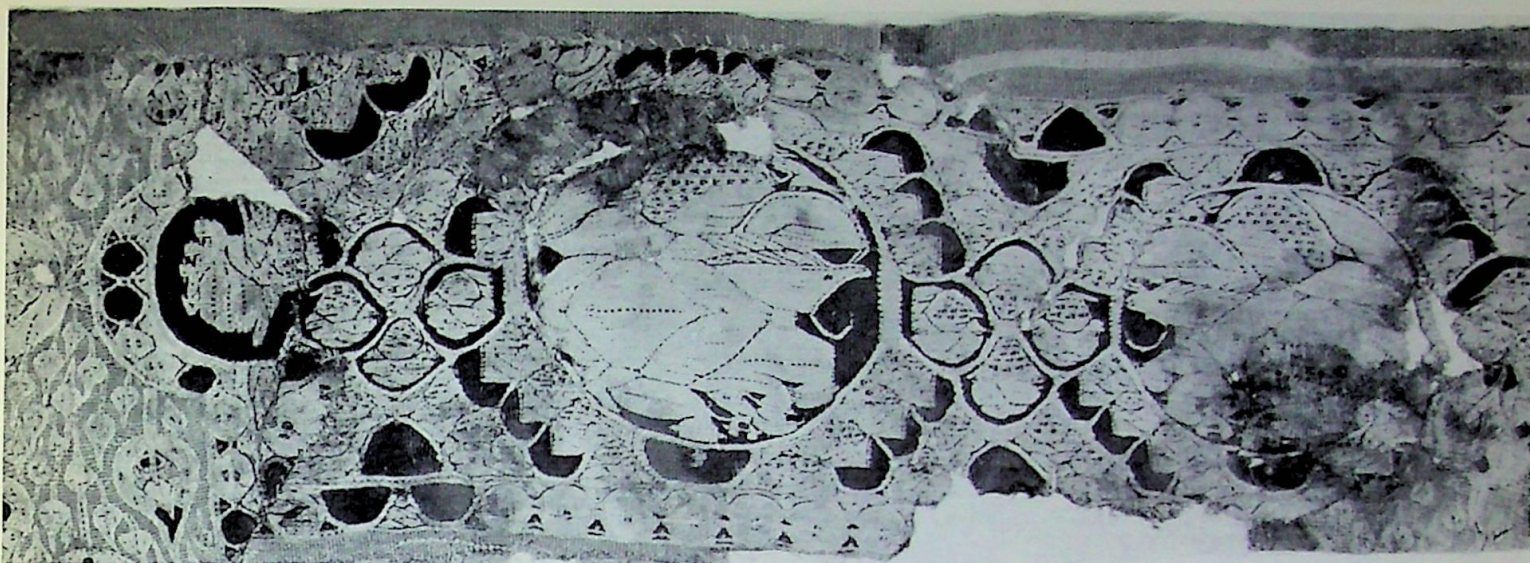


Figure 1 *Textile Museum 1966.33.1*

MORE ABOUT THE DEVELOPING ISLAMIC STYLE IN TAPESTRIES

RUDOLF BERLINER

A recent acquisition by the Textile Museum of a fragment (1966.33.1, 50 x 18 cm.) Figure 1, sheds further light on the hitherto neglected group of tapestries the peculiarities of which I have tried to explain as being characteristics of a transitional phase between the classical-antique, Byzantine, and nascent anti-naturalistic Islamic styles of weaving.¹ The truth is that I could not point to anything comparable to the decisive characteristics of the design in other materials than these tapestries. However, such an argument cannot have much weight for those familiar with the peculiarities of the history of textile design in general. The great number and diversity of those responsible for the design, at any given time, as well as of the consumers of the textiles whose main wish usually is to conform to fashion, create conditions beyond comparison with those in any other field of human production. Human artistic fantasy is unable to create a great amount of ever new ornamental designs; therefore these are among the most conservative, even reactionary, artistic creations. The use of the same patterns or motifs over many centuries or, again, after any interval, deprives them of any absolute value as an aid in determining a date. Once created, ornamental motifs or patterns may never disappear completely. The assumption that the border motif of a tapestry, which Father Pierre du Bourguet² dates 10th century (G 51), may probably be con-

nected with a similar motif on Luristan bronzes of the 7th century B.C. does not clarify anything. It is illuminating that the centuries of dissolution of antique and nascent medieval civilizations developed de-naturalization of originally naturalistically conceived motifs—as we have seen artists do in our day. Of course, it is rarely possible to demonstrate conclusively whether or not the later-born artist arrived spontaneously at a stylization without having been influenced by earlier examples. Believing, as I do, that few people ever knew as much about the conditions of artistic creativity as did the old Goethe, I accept as valid his remarks about contemporary artists, whose style he did not like, that “they have eyes and ears and cannot exclude, even if they wish, other possible contemporary artistic influences which might change their style.” As far as I know, the influence which the tapestries from Egypt had on artists’ styles since the end of the 19th century has not been systematically investigated. It is reported that Matisse and the Fauves were much impressed by the tapestries when they saw them in exhibitions in Paris at the end of the 19th century. But whether this influence extended beyond coloristic effects into details of the design, I do not know. According to my very limited knowledge, the occasional omission of details by Matisse is motivated by other factors than Coptic influence.

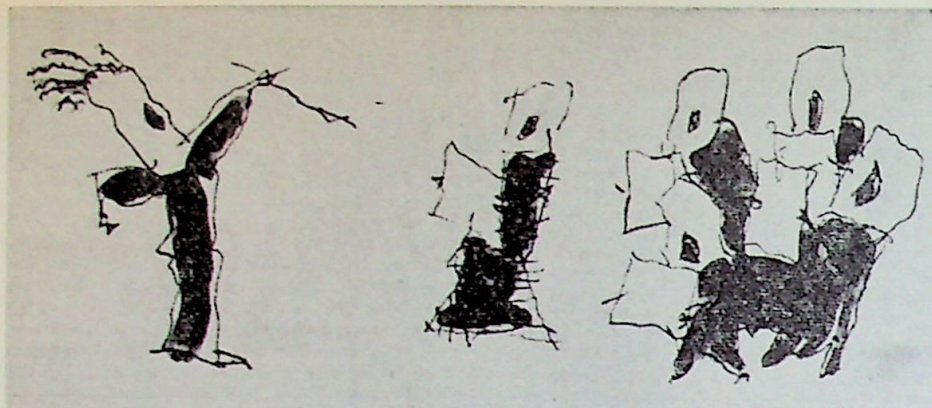


Figure 2 Drawing by Lyonel Feininger

There is a surprising drawing (Figure 2) by Lyonel Feininger³ in a 1951 letter of his which shows singers whose faces have, as a single feature, one aperture serving simultaneously, but convincingly, the required function of eyes and mouth. Whether or not Feininger had seen something similar to the schematic rendering of the face in the central drawing illustrated as Figure 17 in my article in the 1965 *Textile Museum Journal*, is not certain. In any case, with the help of an expressive outline of the head, he infused life into what was an inert geometric form in the Coptic tapestry. On the other hand, Feininger's use or invention of the same form confirms my statement that it is not a mark of insensitive disintegration, but of a developing style in search of a new way of expression. A comparison of the sketch of singers by "MR" in the April 16, 1966 issue of the *Saturday Review*, page 71, shows the device being used without successfully making the faces seem alive. As is seen in my 1965 illustration, Figure 17, or in Matisse's work, one is much more conscious of the omission of details there, rather than of their contraction into a few forms, or only into a single one.

The Textile Museum's fragment, Figure 1, shows the direction of the design development much more definitely than the fragment illustrated in Figure 3.⁴ Whatever it was that the weaver intended the heads of the mounts in the two large circles to represent, they no longer have any similarity to horses' heads, and are purely imaginary. However, the curvature of the neck and the originally raised rear arms of the riders may have, in the upper half-circular form, merged in a manner comparable to the blending of the man's left arm and the horse's hind quarters in the Textile Museum's fragment (1964.17.4), illustrated as Figure 10 in my article of the 1965 *Textile Museum Journal* (also Figure 10 in this article). This mixture of naturalism with unrealistic stylizations in the same motif is a strange phenomenon presented by many tapestries from Egypt which is uninvestigated and unexplained. The usual superficial reference to incompetence, or to the character-

istics of folk arts or children's drawings, does not explain the intentional omission of essential details or their replacement by arbitrary forms. Wherever it is apparent that the omissions or replacements are not the results of negligence, but are deliberately purposeful, it is incumbent upon the historian to search for the possible motives for these alterations. One may assume that, as there were modern mills in Lyons operating exclusively for the African market, consideration for the wishes of customers may have caused changes in the designs. No knowledgeable weaver, able to produce a piece of the quality reproduced by Hilde Zaloscer in her "Aegyptische Wirkereien" (Bern, 1962) Plate 17, would place cat-like heads upon horses' necks if this arrangement did not have some special meaning for the customer. One prerequisite for the progress of research is exact observation of what is really depicted in the tapestries. Following this method, one inevitably becomes aware that an elaborately decorated bag is carried by the pair of the animals in Plate 17. What these animals are meant to be is not ascertainable at present. They occur in many tapestries but they are certainly not horses from the natural world. The customers for whom these tapestries were woven evidently had no more wish to see naturalistic mounts than the customers for whom a tapestry like the one in the Victoria and Albert Museum was woven (Figure 12 illustrated in my article in the *Textile Museum Journal*, 1962) wanted to see a naturalistically rendered human face. What happened with the rendering in the latter case may probably best be termed a partial geometrization. Essentially, the basic characteristic of a face is still recognizable, as is the case with the man's face in the lower part of Figure 13 in my article in the *Textile Museum Journal*, 1965, and also with the face of the man shown in a horizontal position in Figure 3 illustrated here. It is evident that the holes shown in the faces were suggested by those of the eyes and the nose. One may feel inclined to call the many little strokes or dots filling the female faces in the small compartments, sur-

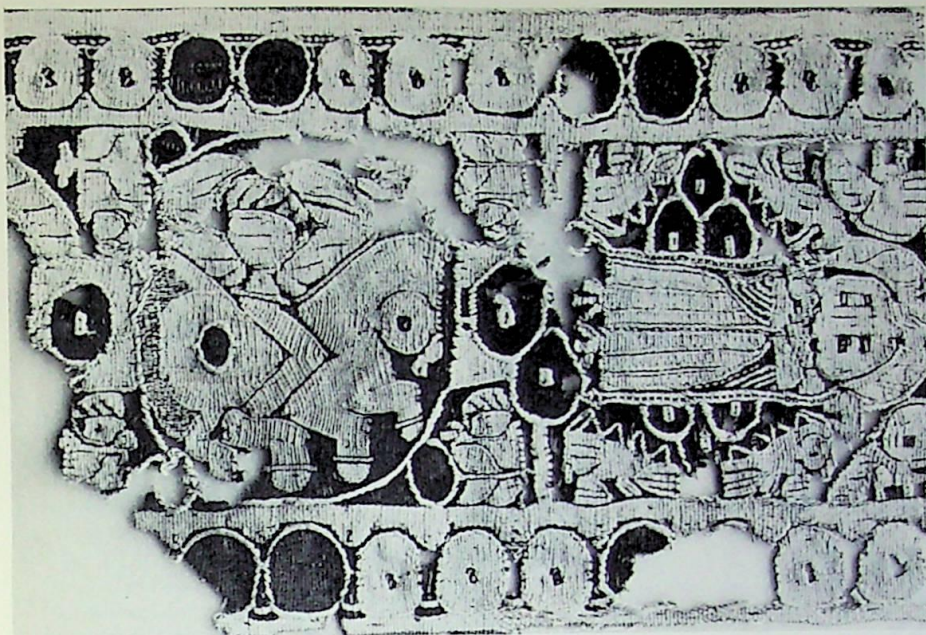


Figure 3 *Textile Museum 721.18*

rounding and connecting the two great circles, the most striking details of the design in the fragment illustrated in Figure 1. There is no reason to doubt that they are intended to denaturalize an otherwise clearly unstylized part of human anatomy. Another phase of this, in my opinion, Islamizing development is shown by the tapestry (formerly Musée Guimet 133) found in Antinoe and published by R. Pfister as "très probablement sassanide" (*Ars Islamica*, vols. XIII/XIV, 1948, Note 87 and Fig. 67). The details of the features in the faces are geometrized as six squares or cubes. Unfortunately, Pfister's reason for attributing the piece to Persia is weak.

Because my approach to the problem is so different from the usual one, it might be well to stress the point a bit further. Professor Zaloscer, who has illustrated her book with interesting pieces belonging to an unidentified private collection, shows on Plate 18 (and discusses it on the preceding page) a tapestry, Figure 4, which is as clear an example of denaturalization of an anatomically correctly conceived female bust as one can ask for. Those who have seen the film showing Picasso at work consciously abstracting in progressive phases from an originally naturalistic motif, will have no difficulty in understanding what happened to the design in the tapestry. Details of the bust, which was originally conceived in the round, have been geometrized; whereas others were treated as ornaments, but the three-dimensionality of the motif was basically preserved. Professor Zaloscer quotes as possibilities all the cliché explanations: children's drawings; ideographic forms of old Egyptian hieroglyphs; probably a work from the hinterland where classical spirit and works never penetrated. However, somewhat in contradiction, she termed correctly the design a very good example of the discontinuation of classical naturalistic conceptions

which, of course, had to be known to become discontinued. How rigid, and at the same time lacking precision, classifications have become is shown in her consideration of the piece as possibly being "very late, perhaps already Islamic"; whereas Father du Bourguet dated his somewhat related Louvre pieces (F 228 to 231) 9th century without—as far as I can find—expressing any doubt that they may not be of Coptic but that they were of Islamic stylization and manufacture. No visible attempt was made, throughout the entire Louvre catalogue, to separate the two according to the styles. This

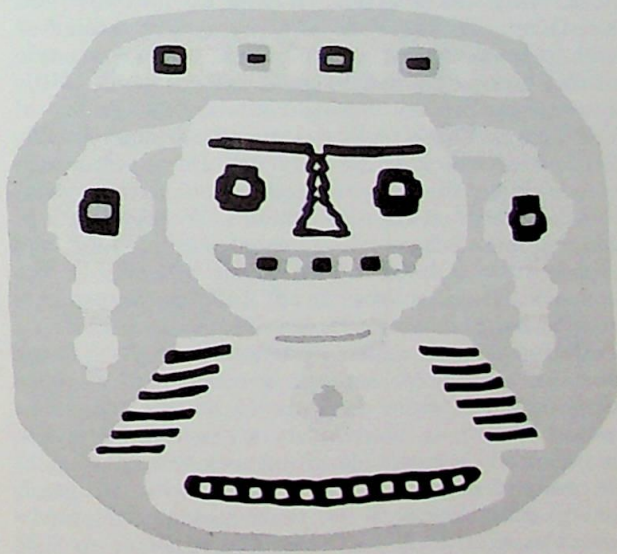


Figure 4 *Schematic drawing after Plate 18 in Prof. Hilde Zaloscer's "Ägyptische Wirkereien." Bern, 1962*

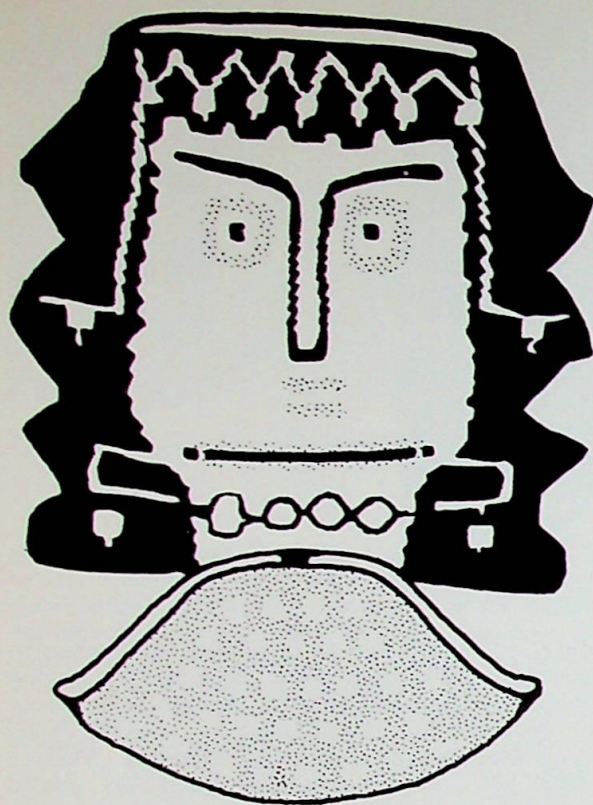


Figure 5 Schematic drawing after F 229 in *Musée National du Louvre Catalogue des Étoffes Coptes I*.



Figure 6 Schematic drawing after E 30 in *Musée National du Louvre Catalogue des Étoffes Coptes I*.

is one of the weaknesses in the catalogue; another being the lack of a thorough analysis in the descriptions, which were evidently done by inexperienced assistants who were mostly, apparently, satisfied with merely describing the obvious. As one example of this lack of thoroughness, I wish to point to the descriptions of the female busts in the center of F 227-231. Three tapestries are listed under F 231, the last of which is the only one among the seven which shows the ear ornaments pendant from some remnant form of the ears which in F 227, 230, and 231, 1 and 2 have disappeared entirely and are replaced by a hook-shaped form; whereas in the somewhat related bust in F 147, the ornaments simply hang from the hair. The most interesting evolution is represented by F 228-9 where the ears are also entirely absent and are replaced by angles hanging down from diadems, each with a pendant pearl. This is a consciously stylized motif which is balanced on each side of the neck with an equally unreal and delicately drawn oblong with two pendant pearls continuing the pearl necklace. However one classifies F 230-1, it will be difficult to find any evidence that the design in F 228-9 can be Coptic. A much more delicate draughtsmanship has been used here (Figure 5).

It is a fortunate coincidence that, in addition to the tapestries with busts already mentioned, the Louvre owns four others which evidently belong in the same context. Father du Bourguet lists these as E 28-31, dates them in the 8th century, and connects them with the derivations of "egyptian-roman portraits" by pointing to their laurel wreaths. However, a careful study of the design will show its apparent closer relation to the F 227 ff. group than to anything that is of late classical period. In this connection, one wonders what has become of the outline of the chin in E 28-9. The meaning of the motif is completely misunderstood. It is not, however, our task here to analyze the pieces in every detail. For our purpose, it must suffice to point only at some characteristic details. Let us look at the progressive stylization of the ears and ear ornaments in E 28-31, and compare the beginning of a delicate design of the curls in E 28-9 with what appears to be an end phase in F 228-9. The pendant angles of these ornaments are repeated in smaller shapes in the E 30-1 diadems where the design of the ears corresponds to F 230 ff., whose ornaments are longer. What appears to be top lines of the diadems in F 228-9 are in reality the geometrized crania of the skulls. The suspended diadem above

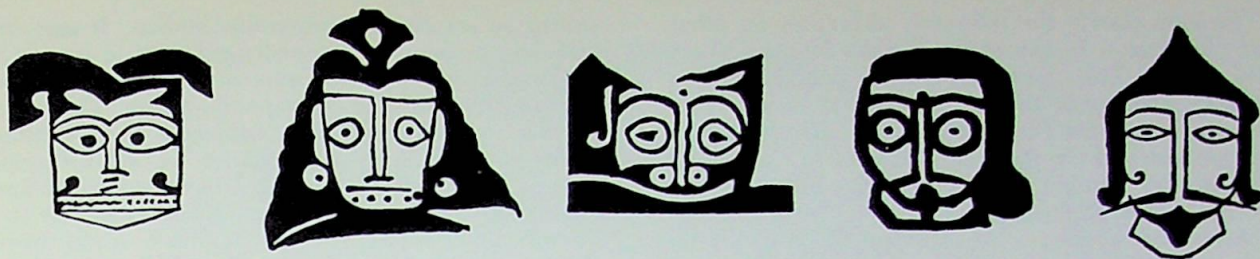


Figure 7 Painted faces on Early Islamic pottery, after Messerschmidt in *Madri der Mitteilungen*, 6b, 6e, 6d, 5f, 6f (from left to right)

the head in Zaloscer's Plate 18 is a parallel stylistic phenomenon. Now it becomes evident that the crania are somewhat more like the ornamental disks in F 230-1 which show no diadems but have the wreaths reduced to ornaments. The manner of laterally outlining the noses is basically the same in the E and F pieces, although they are longer and more geometrized in the latter group. It appears to be evident that E 28-9 and F 228-9 are respectively the products of the same weavers. In spite of variations in the design, F 230-1 were probably woven by one person.

We are nearing the core of the problem. Notwithstanding the differences in the designs of the faces and busts in E 28-9 and 30-1 respectively, it seems probable that they were woven in the same workshop. The birds in the framing of E 30 are better observed and are more vivacious than those in E 28-9. However, the circular ornament motifs are very close to each other. Putti and birds in E 31 are not of the same models as those in E 28-9, but they are closely related, especially in the unusual attempt to avoid showing the genitals. It is important to note that the manner of rendering breasts and shoulders is the same in E 30 (Figure 6) as it is in F 228-9; whereas the design in F 230-1 is closer to that of F 227, especially because of the lack of indication of the arms. Very remarkable are the various ways of indicating a shadow behind the busts—a reminder that they are three-dimensional. In F 227 shadows and naturalness in the bust are lacking, although the head is clearly rendered as three-dimensional, and the three-dimensionality of the neck is preserved, though it is transformed into an egg shape. It is most interesting to observe how this motif has been transformed in F 230, 231, and 233, into a brooch-like ornament, fastened in front of the garment. There is no evident reason for attributing F 227 to the same workshop as the other discussed pieces. It belongs in our context because of its showing basically the same mixture of naturalness and geometrical stylization which characterizes these other pieces. It would be sheer arbitrariness to attribute all the tapestries, which show related phenomena, to a single workshop, instead of acknowledging that there was a transitional transformation of non-Islamic to Islamic weaving, or a blending of the two. If one searches patiently for the evidence, one

will find it. It is a matter of course that a stylistic tendency may find expression in various ways.

I agree with Father du Bourguet that a probable date for E 28 ff. is the 8th century, but there is no evident reason for separating F 228 ff. from them. It has appeared to be highly probable that E 28-9 and E 30-1 were products of the same workshop, and it is also probable that the same holds true for F 228 ff. The explanation for the extreme stylistic differences between E 28-9 and F 228-9 lies in the first pair's clear Coptic character and in the latter pair's Islamic one. The stylistic character of E 30-1 and F 230-1 is a still more mixed one, but the relations among the ten pieces are so strong and obvious that there seems to be every justification for finding in them evidence of their being contemporaneous products from the same workshop *employing weavers of various ethnic origins*. No available evidence compels us to separate the G pieces mentioned later from the F pieces or to date these later.

The Louvre catalogue, in spite of its 1964 copyright date, and the fourth volume (1963) of the *Madri der Mitteilungen* published by the Deutsches Archäologisches Institut, Abteilung Madrid (copyrighted in 1965) became available in Washington at the beginning of 1966. This volume contains a very important contribution, to our context, by O. K. Werckmeister (p. 141 ff.). His article deals with the illustrations of the *Biblia Hispalense*, a mozarabian manuscript of the 10th century. He observed a great difference between the methods of rendering the human figures in the three miniatures of the manuscript and those in other Spanish drawings of the 10th century. The only analogies he believed he had found are in Islamic lustre paintings usually dated in the 9th and 10th centuries (p. 153 ff.). For our context, the most interesting sentence reads, as translated: "The much abstracted style of the human figures in these paintings, of which the origin [Herkunft] is not yet clarified, seems to be similar to the style of the figures in the *Biblia Hispalense*" (p. 156). Figures 5 and 6 on page 157 (schematic drawings of faces, some of which are reproduced in my Figure 7) and Plates 72 and 73 (upper part of the body of a man from a bowl in the Cleveland Museum of Art and a man on an Arabian papyrus from Egypt of about 900 in Vienna) are intended to illustrate his point.

To help clarify the influence of textiles on other art phenomena is one of the *Textile Museum Journal's* aims. This, however, can be done only in a cursory manner in the present article, since I must remain within the *Journal's* confines. The musician on the bowl of the Arabian Museum in Cairo (Pl. 73) is very similar to the one in the Freer Gallery of Art which Richard Ettinghausen illustrated and commented upon in his article on "Realism in Islamic Art."⁵ He calls the figure of the man "highly stylized . . . without physical substance—more a symbol than a human figure." This is a correct characterization because the figure lacks nearly any suggestion of volume. We cannot call it a transformation of a Coptic motif—which would be a most interesting point for our context—because no similar Coptic figures are known but it can be stated, almost with certainty, that the method of drawing the eyebrows, the nose and the moustache and the omission of any indication for the mouth are related to the drawing of faces in what I termed the beginning of Islamic influence in the tapestries. According to Dr. Ettinghausen, this stylistic phase is a starting point for the subsequent development. For our context, it is a terminal stylistic phase. The above mentioned bowls, in Cairo and in the Freer Gallery of Art, are perfect examples of a fully matured style, a phase which can be arrived at only after an evolution which, in this case, may have lasted from one to several generations, and which cannot be localized or limited with certainty to any part of the vast Islamic domain extending from Asia to Spain. One cannot place, with confidence, Messerschmidt's Figure 5b-5e and Figures 6b-6e, 6g into a chronological order, because one has to reckon with differences in the quality of the painters. However, one can assume with assurance that the more they resemble tapestry faces, the earlier is the phase they represent. This tendency is especially obvious in Figures 6d, 6b, and 6e, illustrated in my Figure 7. The two latter ones show most interesting misinterpretations of the motif of the necklace in du Bourguet F 228-9.

The Textile Museum was also very fortunate in acquiring the roundel, 1966.15.1 shown in Figure 8. It is 155 x 165 mm. in size and is of subdued coloration, mainly blue-green in the field and burnt sienna elsewhere. It requires some effort to understand its style and, therefore, its importance. The roundel, designed and woven by non-Islamic hands, does not contain any clearly Islamic form, but it evidently represents the transitional phase we are dealing with. Two strongly contrasting conceptions of form are united in a single body. The heads of the putti and their scarfs are surprisingly vivid, and are naturalistically designed; whereas the remainder of their bodies is reduced and transformed to an absolutely flat ornamental shape. It is, at present, very difficult to quote other examples of what are called Coptic products with similar reduction and stylization, although Father du Bourguet in his H 114 shows the equivalent unifying of naturalization and stylization, re-

sulting in scrolls, in comparable bodies. It may be sufficient to refer to the one-legged putti in Figure 8 to become aware of the evident unification of the outside arms with the corresponding legs. The birds in this roundel have been subjected to a similar stylization. With the prevalence of art-historical interest in stylistic development in the so-called fine arts, it has not been customary to acknowledge the possibility that stylistic development could have been anticipated in some craft arts, but by their very nature, which I have outlined briefly, none are better qualified for such a role than textile crafts.⁶

Referring to Figures 9 and 11 in my article "Remarks on Some Tapestries from Egypt," in the 1965 issue of the *Textile Museum Journal* (illustrated here as Figures 9 and 12 in greatly reduced size) one becomes aware that the tendency to transform organic limbs into scrolls is already indicated there. Unfortunately, but characteristically, the Louvre catalogue does not even attempt to describe a single detail of the representation in G 80 (dated 10th century) or to explain what else, beside the bust and three running lions, is represented in G 81. Even if one cannot agree with the interpretative description of the rider in the H 197 circle, it must be acknowledged that an attempt was made to understand the representation, although it was a wild notion to see in the rider a mixture of the elements of a nereid (a motif occupying the place of an "idée fixe" in the descriptions) and a putto. Actually, this rider belongs in the same context as the ones in Figures 9 and 11, and his horse is a somewhat natural representation with a pendant tail—even though it is only a fragment—similar to that in Figure 11. The rising scroll is an ornamental addition to the hindquarter. The ornamental riders in the hands may be compared with details in Figures 9 and 10, H 118 and 196 belong to the same motif and stylistic context. Du Bourguet's 11th century date for his quoted H pieces seems to me to be unnecessarily late. The simple truth is that he had recognized neither the coherence nor the problems of the group and that the term "démembré" for its style (H 118) is inadequate.

Readers of my articles in the *Textile Museum Journal* must be aware that I am by no means convinced that all so-called Coptic tapestries were really woven in Egypt, and that it is very disturbing that so little attention is given to what, even at present, could possibly be found out about tapestry weaving elsewhere in the Byzantine empire, the existence of which cannot be doubted, even if the evidence is still scarce. That the weakest kind of reasoning against them is judged to be sufficient, proves only the strength of the prejudice against the acknowledgment of the production of Byzantine tapestries. I have recently come across the refutation of Seyrig's and Roberts' explanation of the inscription HERAKLEIAS, in the Textile Museum's hanging 11.18, by Picard-Schmitter.⁷ Omitting the final "S" in the name, he connects it with the custom of including the name of a deceased person on a wreath of

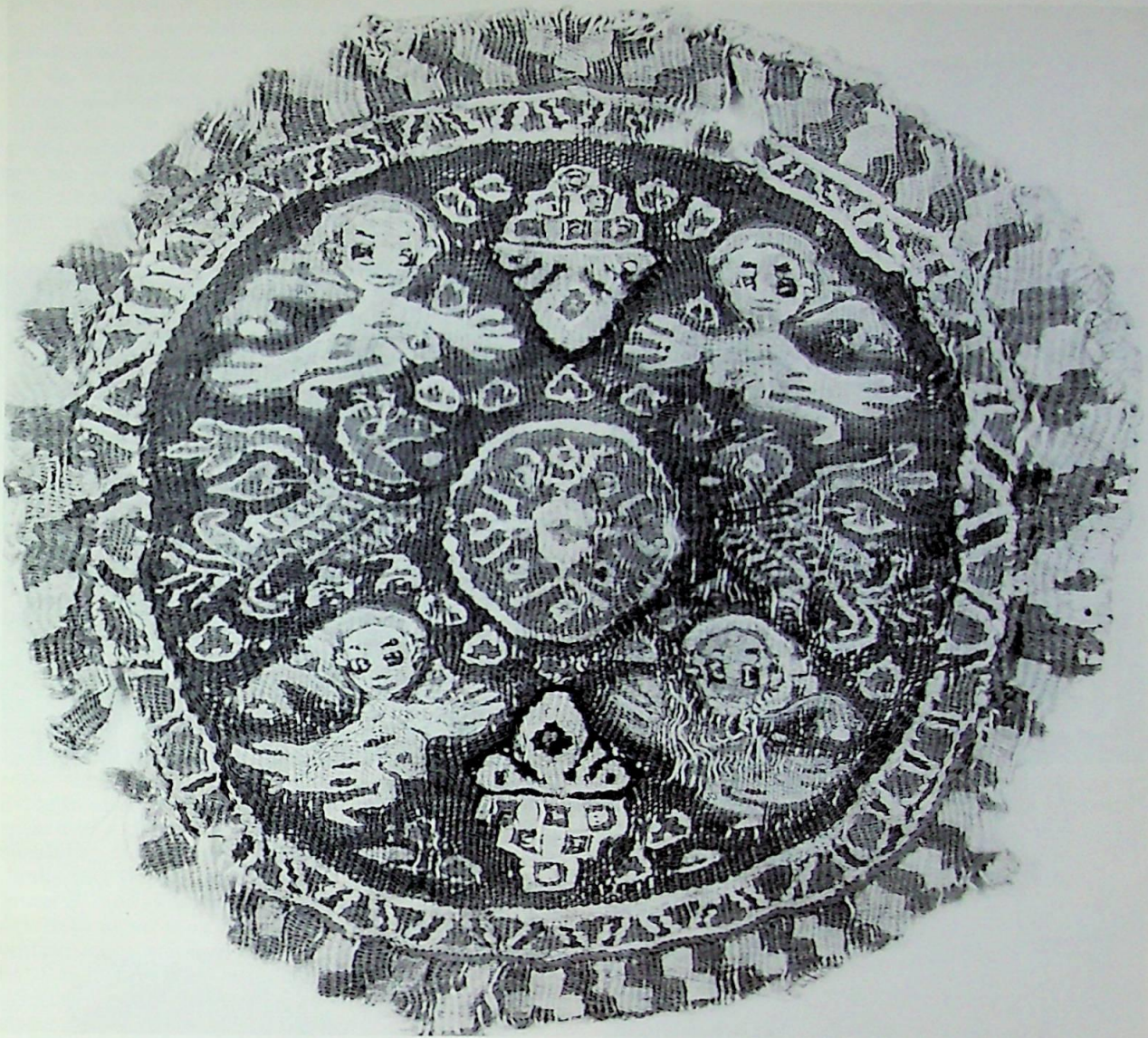


Figure 8 Textile Museum 1966.15.1

flowers on the day of the funeral. (The italics are mine. It is left to his reader to assume that the deceased person's name is to be woven, immediately after his death, into one of the available hangings in stock.) Picard-Schmitter objects to the brevity of the inscription, without considering that only fragments of the hanging are preserved and that speculations as to whether other wreaths did or did not contain other parts of the inscription are without basis.

In 1942, George Hewitt Myers, founder of the Textile Museum, directed attention to some inconsistencies of ruling theories with such evidence as there was after excavations at Dura-Europos.⁸ Unfortunately, his pertinent remarks were taken seriously only by some researchers of the technical aspects of the so-called Coptic tapestries. The impact

of their contentions on the general evolution of the historical research could not but be very slight, because they were overextended. It would have been wonderful had it proved possible to demonstrate credibly that certain pieces could be classified as Armenian, although any reference to such Armenian tapestries in the written historical sources is lacking. In fact, it cannot be demonstrated. Mr. Myers' observations, however, still remain valid as a warning that the foundations upon which the historical knowledge about Coptic tapestries is based are very weak. An Egyptian gentleman told me that, in his opinion, one should call "Coptic" only those pieces which clearly show Coptic characteristics. But, what are these besides Coptic inscriptions? Du Bourguet² is not concerned about the ethnic origin of the weavers. However, he warns that notices in



Figure 9 *Textile Museum 1964.17.2 (detail)*



Figure 10 *Textile Museum 1964.17.4 (detail)*



Figure 11 *Textile Museum 1964.17.7 (detail)*

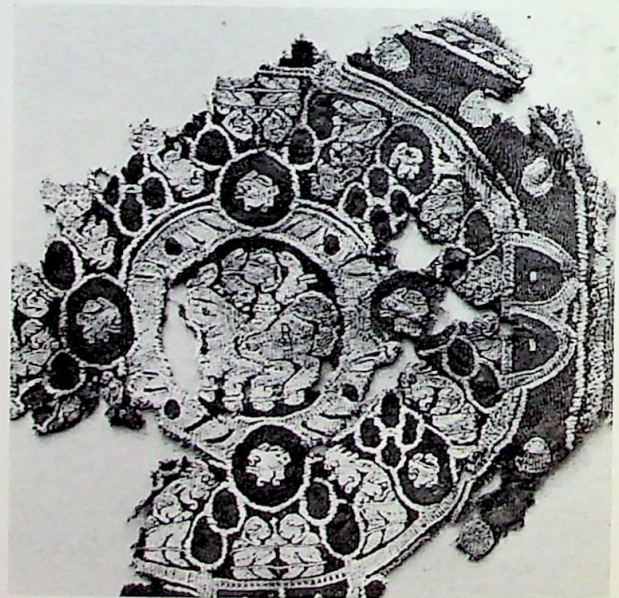


Figure 12 *Textile Museum 721.20*

this first volume of the catalogue, indicating that pieces like the above mentioned from his H groups were recently excavated in specific sites, though credible, are not absolutely certain (page 7 ff.). In no case would even a certain knowledge of the place of excavation be equivalent to a proof that the piece was woven there. The situation is rather desperate, since no evidence is available concerning tapestries from other eastern countries comparable to the Coptic tapestries. If there is such evidence, it would be camouflaged because of its being found in clandestine excavations. Nonetheless, attempts at separation cannot always be avoided as working hypotheses in cases where the differences in form are so great as to suggest different ethnical or cultural origin (though the problem of products of some export trade must never be forgotten). The subjective feeling, though never equivalent to evidence, cannot be fully excluded as basis for judgment—for example: the evolution of the rider motif shown in Figures 9 to 11 and in the related Louvre pieces seems to me to be attributable to Egypt with great probability; whereas attribution of Coptic workmanship to the Textile Museum's new acquisition, Figure 1, is still much more doubtful than it appeared at first for the group (Figures 11 to 15, pages 28-32) included in my article in the 1965 issue of the *Textile Museum Journal*, and illustrated here, in reduced sizes, as Figures 3, 12, 13, 14, and 15. A workshop producing such pieces could have been found in any country of the former Roman Empire where the Moslem conquerors met firmly established craft traditions. That we are unable to name the country is only a consequence of the lack of evidence, but not of an inherent lack of probability. On the other hand, the piece in Figure 1 looks less Coptic than does the one illustrated in Figure 3, and we can only assume that it shows Islamization as progressing. At the moment, the question as to whether it is Egyptian or not seems less important than whether or not the piece strengthens the conjecture of an intermediary phase between the no longer antique classical tradition and the not yet developed Islamic style. That basically the conception of the bodies of the two main riders, the outlines of the female heads, and the small scale rider with a lance are still based on the classical one, is evident. However, the lack of connection of the rider's right foot with the right leg, the unnaturalness of the horses' heads and of the inner design of the female heads, clearly show that tendencies of Islamization are becoming prevalent, no matter who the weavers may have been. That they were influenced by a non-classical tradition or taste becomes especially evident in the ornamentation at the left-hand end in the panel. (The ground there is yellow, not red as it is elsewhere.) The tradition which inspired the weavers, however, cannot be designated. It is not a Coptic one, as far as is known. The rigid stems, from which seemingly pointed leaves grow, are strange. Many of the stems appear to branch out of the leaves. This scheme was evidently used to cover the background

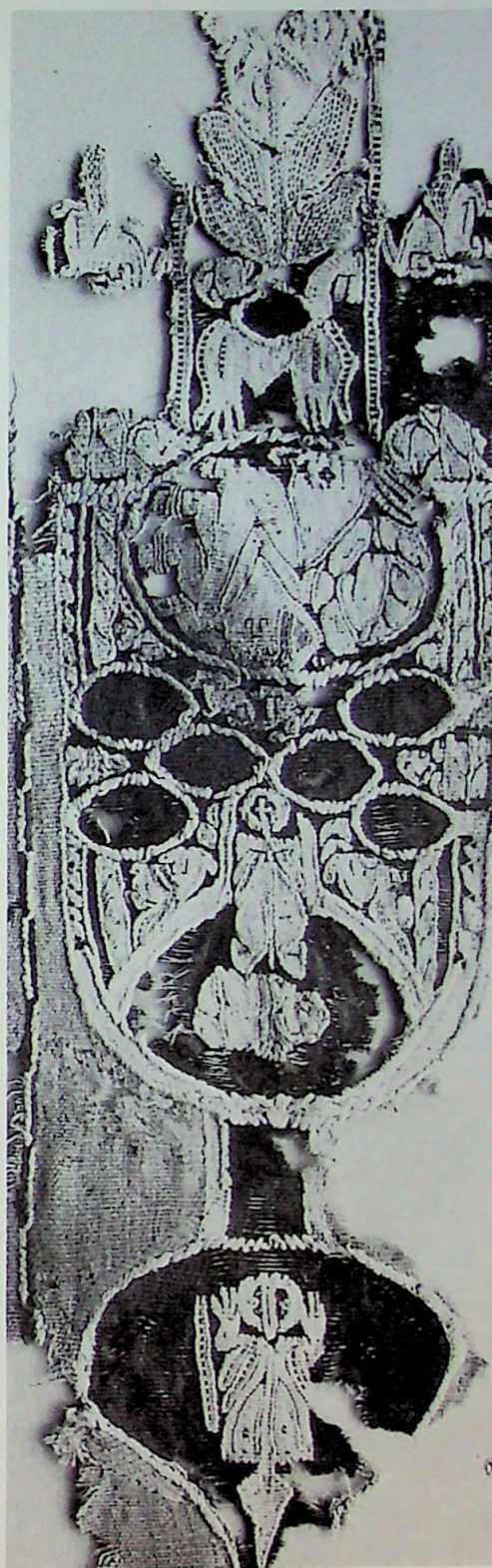


Figure 13 Textile Museum 721.19

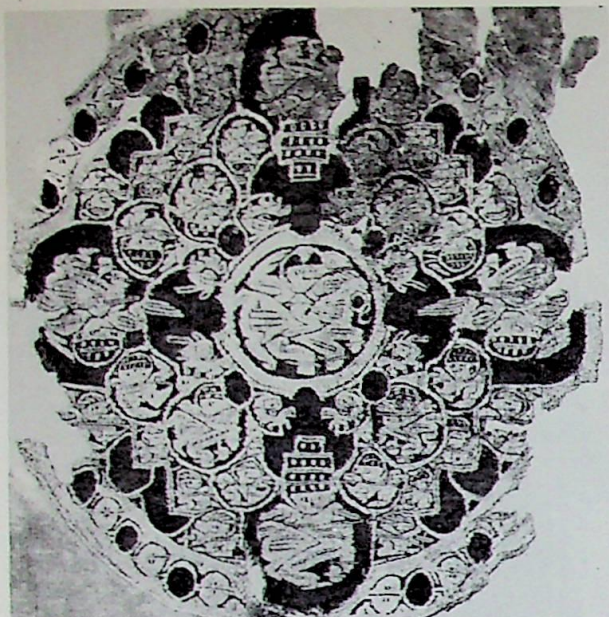


Figure 14 *Textile Museum 71.109 (detail)*

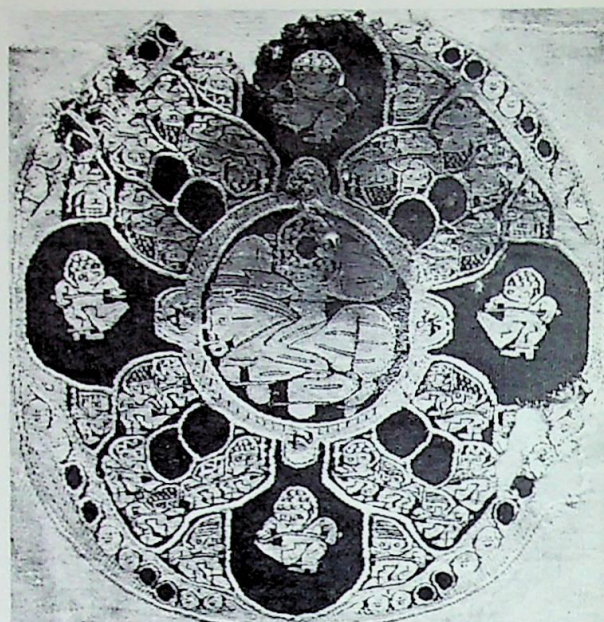


Figure 15 *The Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, No. 38. Dt. 18 (detail)*

as densely as possible. The strangeness of this ornamentation can be easily seen in the two large leaves where they are divided in a framing band showing dots, as do the smaller leaves—a derivation from the motif of the leaves with indented outlines as is shown in Figure 2 in my article in the 1963 issue of the *Textile Museum Journal*, and an inner design repeating the leaf motif. They are pierced twice—once by an oval through which the stem of the inner leaf grows, and by a heart shape. They remind one of what has been said about a probable influence of needlework on the clavus illustrated in Figure 13. It may be added that the treatment of bands and the stick in Figure 13 corresponds to that of the stems in the fragment, Figure 1, and that the design of the leaves there is similar to that which is indicated beneath the man in Figure 13. It may also be noted that the disks in the framing in Figure 1 correspond to those in the fragment illustrated in Figure 14. After analyzing the many detail forms, a return to the riders in the circles may reinforce the impression that we have to do with the products of, or for, a civilization which was decidedly different from the so-called Coptic one. The lack of features in the faces, the heads of the mounts and the strange little animals above and beneath them, belong to an unnatural world which is foreign to us and which we are unable to connect with a specific group. Striking are both the fanciful little animals and the unreality of the faces, which must have been connected with some taboo. A lack of eyes can be hypothetically con-

nected with the general Oriental fear of the evil eye about which the infidels were warned in the first sura of the Qoran.⁹ This fear may have been felt by some as yet to us unknown group before any rendering of faces. There seem to have been variations in the conception of the taboo, conspicuously not extending to the eyes. However, we have entered the realm of mere supposition and hypothesis, due to lack of relevant textiles not found in Egypt in fact or claim.

No criticism of Father du Bourguet is intended to obscure his great merits for letting fresh air come into what had become a stuffy atmosphere in the research field, and also for his success in making a definite breakthrough by leading research into the free spaces outside the walls of customary suppositions. It is no contradiction of this evaluation if a question is raised as to whether the administration of the Louvre was well advised to burden a scholar of du Bourguet's type—and probable heavy work load—with the responsibility of transmuting his broad insights into the small change which the minutiae of a catalogue of such a mass of material require. It is strange that for a man of his training he does not seem to be concerned with clarity in the terminology. It is due to his meritorious insights that he mentions, several times, a Byzantine influence beginning with pieces he dates in the 9th century. But it will confuse at least some readers that four lines later on the same page 28 the same group of tapestries is called "tissus byzantines." One cannot help having the

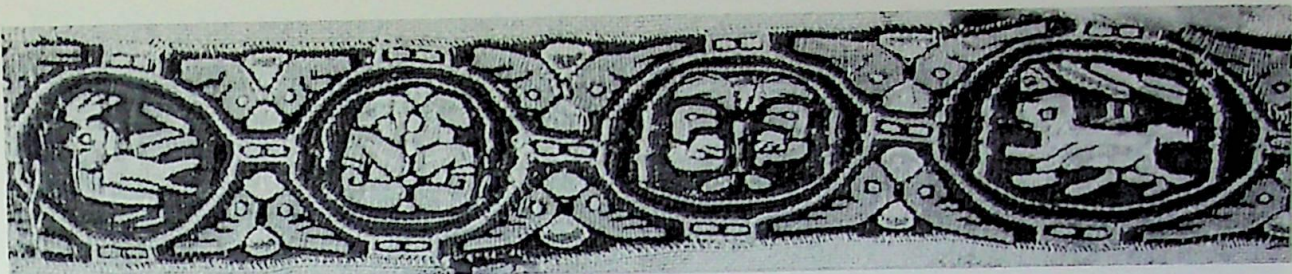


Figure 16 *The Cooper Union Museum, New York. 1902.1.143*

impression occasionally that informal asides of the Father, which found their way into print, refer all too lightly to basic questions. Without considering the consequences, a remark on page 30 makes it doubtful that the style of G 132 can, with certainty, be held as Coptic. There is not the slightest reference to this (well founded) doubt in the listing of the piece on page 391, which is the more surprising since G 131 is called "sans doute étoffe musulmane." One is left to wonder about the meaning of the terminology. Was there an intention to distinguish style from workmanship in G 132, and what does étoffe in G 131 mean? One cannot escape the conclusion that such problems have been handled without much care because Father du Bourguet is adhering still, in spite of his progressiveness, to the usual interest in the survival of traditions of Coptic textile craft arts, without any interest in the indications of the development of a genuine Islamic style and craft. Enough about the Louvre collection was known to leave room for a hope that the catalogue could possibly contain decisive information for making any precise dates certain so that it could serve as an objective guidepost for other classifications. However, it is subjectively important for our context that du Bourguet proposes the date of 8th century for the first one of his pieces showing traces of what I am calling beginning Islamization of the design. From the late 8th century, 784/5 is the earliest securely dated known tapestry of which at least the ornamentation of the framing strips is stylized in a way which one cannot call Coptic.¹⁰ Ernst J. Grube, regrettably for our context, did not concern himself¹¹ with the beginning of Islamization of Egyptian tapestry weaving, stating only that "there is clearly a stylistic change in the Tulunid and the Fatimid periods", but saying nothing about earlier traces, though it is again the 8th century in which we are consequently allowed to expect them.

Attempting to sum up soberly the results of our investigation of the Textile Museum's fragment, Figure 1, one may be allowed to state that any evidence for determining the country of the origin of the group of tapestries is lacking. The fragment illustrated in Figure 3 in which (as may be added now) the faces of the prisoners are also without real

features, is of a somewhat earlier style than that of the fragment in Figure 1, which represents the new stylistic phase in a more definite and accomplished way. Evidence is again lacking for determining with certainty whether the reason for this was because of a difference in the level of quality of the weavers and the time in which they worked. Dating the fragments tentatively 8th to 9th century has only a hypothetical value.

The deadline for delivery of this paper to the printer was nearing when, through the kindness of Dr. Deborah Thompson, I received a reprint of her article "A Fatimid Textile of Coptic Tradition with Arabic Inscription."¹² For our context, it is very important that she directs attention to the Cooper Union Museum strip 1902.1.143 (her Figure 13, and my Figure 16 here), without of course being aware of its connection with the Textile Museum group of tapestries. It belongs to one of the terminal phases of its style certainly woven by a moslem. It is called Fatimid which is, I believe, too late a classification. It can well be as early as the 9th century. In any case, the style is considerably earlier than that of Dr. Thompson's Figure 14 strip which she allotted to the 10th century. The three most interesting details of the design are:

1. The complete transformation of a seated man into a flat ornament, for which I am unable to quote any Coptic or Islamic parallel.

2. The same transformation of the birds in the motif in the intervals between the circles.

3. The still three-dimensionally conceived five-legged dog with a bird hovering over him, whose body, a very paragon of du Bourguet's "style démembré," consists of the head, a line and three bars, while the legs and feet again are conceived as three-dimensional. The strip is a high-class tapestry weave in silk which, by the very contrast, seems to me to allow a first attempt of classification of the Textile Museum panel (1964.19.1, 25 x 14 mm.) Figure 17. It was acquired with the feeling that it was not Coptic, though a distant descendant of the classic tradition designed in a conscious stylization. The coloration of the tapestry is a brownish purple and white. The most interesting detail is

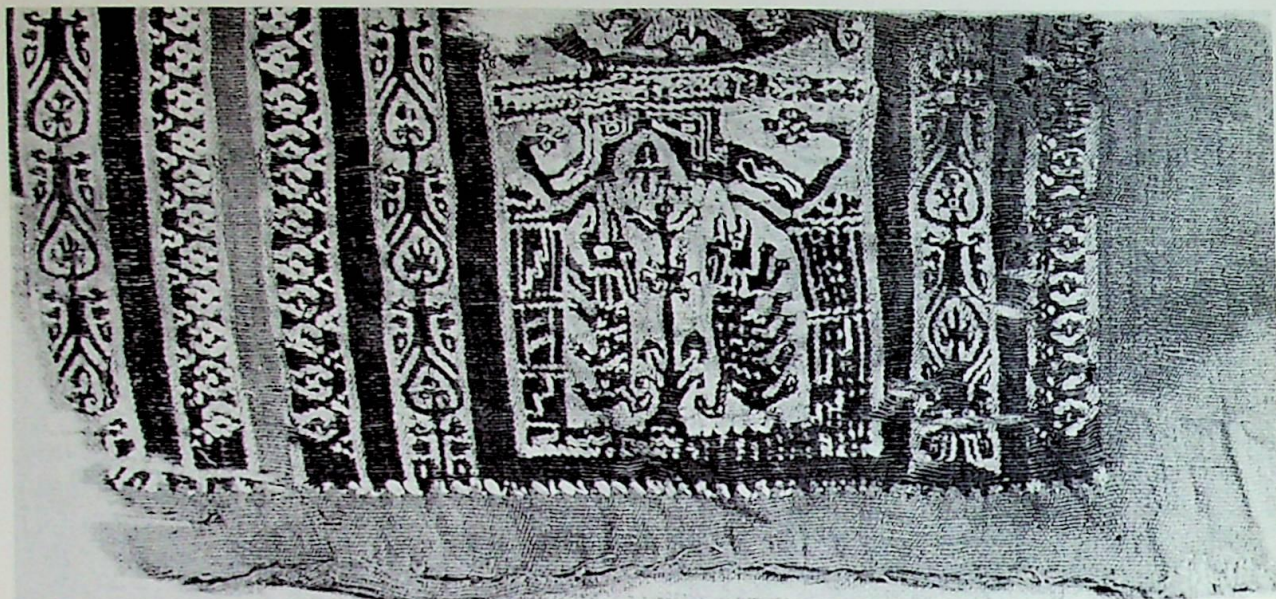


Figure 17 Textile Museum 1964.19.1

the preservation of the classical aedicula scheme, though it is designed in a decidedly unclassical way. The lateral pillars are replaced by blocks with a very primitive inner decoration. Small fragments of capitals and of the architectural arch are shown but the arch is formed by two fully ornamented flat birds with long flourishes as tails. Correspondingly linearly conceived are the original floral ornaments in three of the vertical bands. The middle of the arch is remarkably emphasized by a transformed lamp; whereas the tree in the middle of the composition beneath it is somewhat pushed out of center because of the unequal division of the field of the aedicula, where two vertically disposed animals are shown, one of which is five- the other six-legged. They are nearly, but not quite, completely conceived as flat. Near the top of the tree is, what appears to be meant as a bird, which is a descendant of the Coptic motif of an animal before a tree. (See Louvre G 329, which is in my opinion dated too late as being 10th century.) We can assume that the contemporaries of the weaver and he himself interpreted the main motifs in the two inner bands as being faces, which is what they appear to us. The design of the panel, as a whole, is consistent with the definition of a transitional stylistic phase. Its designer still knew enough of the classicizing traditions of the craft to be influenced by them, but the weaver was reared in another tradition which, whether it was an Arabic or another one, is at present unknown to us.

NOTES

¹ *Textile Museum Journal*, Dec. 1965. "Remarks on Some Tapestries from Egypt."

² Musée National du Louvre. *Catalogue des Étoffes Coptes I*. Paris, 1964.

³ Our reproduction is after the one in the *Sueddeutsche Zeitung* of May 3, 1965.

⁴ Figure 3, as well as Figures 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, and 15 were reproduced in a much larger size in my article, "Remarks on Some Tapestries from Egypt" in the 1965 issue of the *Textile Museum Journal*.

⁵ "Studi orientalistici in onore di Giorgio Levi della Vida." Rome, 1956, Vol. I, p. 255 ff. Messerschmidt 6 f, Figure 7 in this article.

⁶ However, through a fortunate coincidence, I can show how paste papers, since the 17th century, could anticipate modern stylistic traits which may, or may not, have been influenced by them. *Anzeiger des Germanischen Museums*, Nürnberg, 1964, p. 106 ff.

⁷ In *Monuments Piot* 52, 1962, p. 48 and Note 6.

⁸ *Ars Islamica* IX, p. 156 ff.

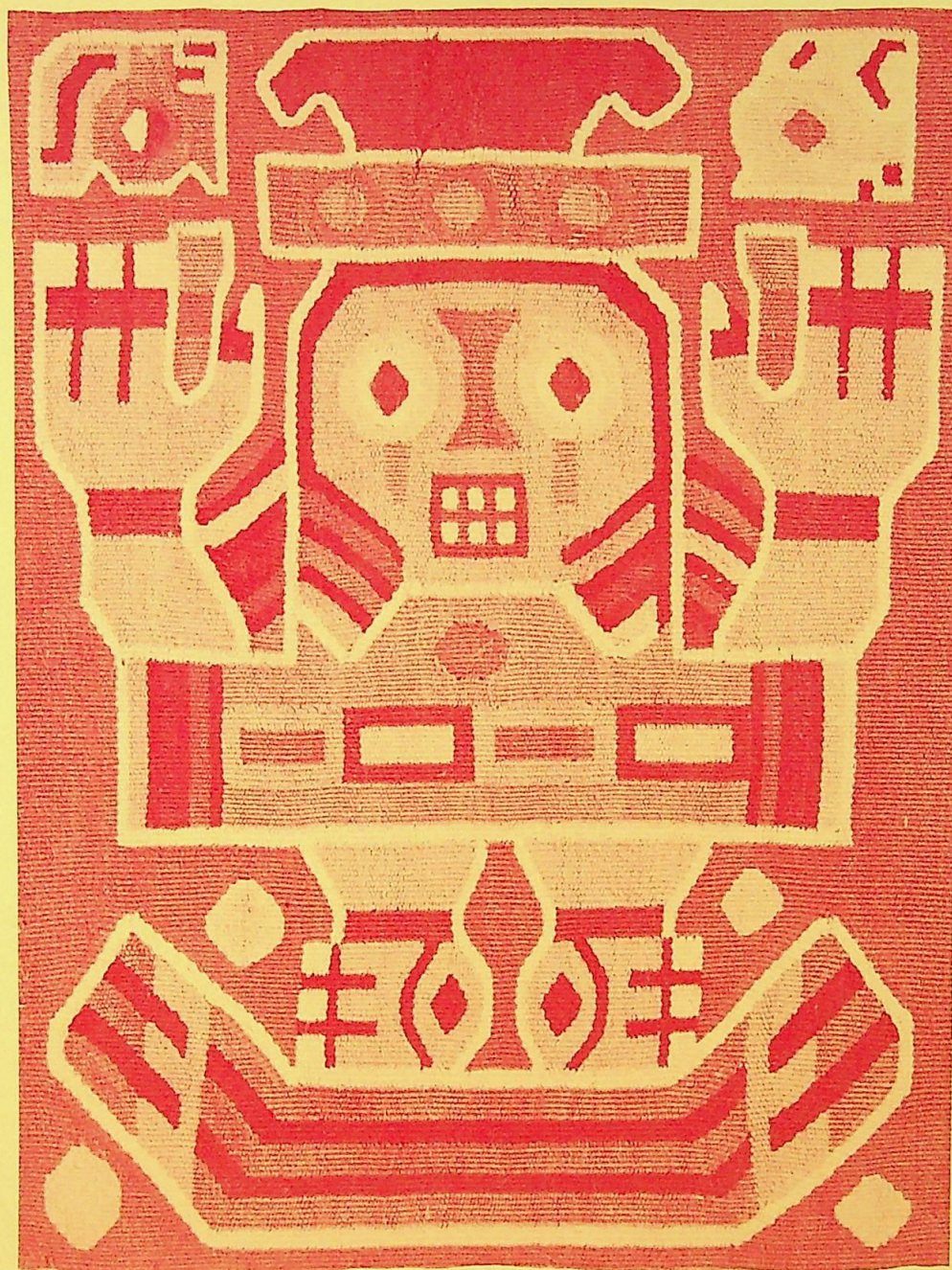
⁹ Information kindly given by Professor Muhammad 'Abdul 'Aziz Marzuq of Baghdad. A discussion with him was influential in making some of my thoughts more definite.

¹⁰ "The Tapestry Decoration on Fatimid Textiles" (in Arabic) by Muhammad 'Abdul 'Aziz Marzuq. Cairo, 1942. Pl. I. Mr. J. V. Knight of the Arabian American Oil Co. kindly informed me about the text of the book. He translated, especially for me from pages 15 and 16, the sentences quoted to me by the author as being important for our context. Unfortunately, any evidence where the various fabrics adorning the ka'bah in Mekka even before Muhammad had been woven is lacking. The same holds true with the figured textiles which Muhammad himself was said to have tolerated in his house, provided they were in a proper place beneath the human bodies like cushions or carpets. See Sir Thomas W. Arnold, "Painting in Islam," Oxford, 1928, p. 7. There were many possibilities where textiles could come from; comp. R. B. Sergeant in *Ars Islamica* 13/14, 1948, p. 75 ff.

¹¹ "Studies in the Survival and Continuity of the Pre-Muslim Tradition in Egyptian Islamic Art" in *Journal of the American Research Center in Egypt*, 1, 1962, p. 81 ff.

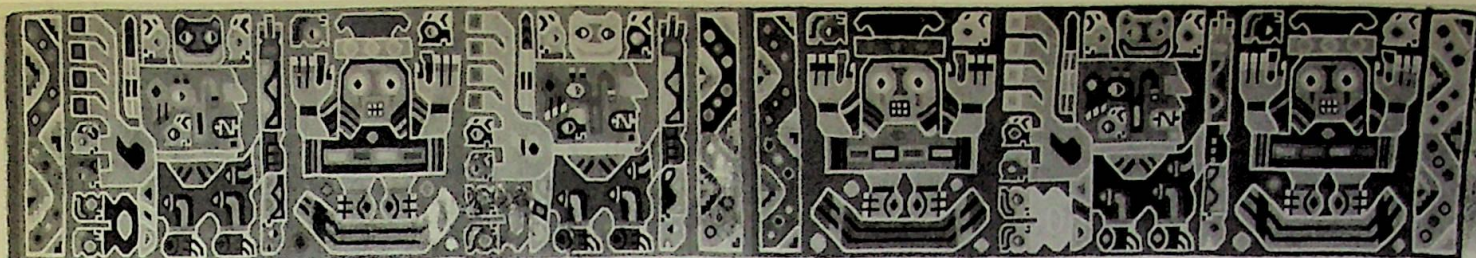
¹² In *Journal of the American Research Center in Egypt*, vol. IV, 1965, p. 145 ff.

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COVER: Detail of interlocked tapestry band (illustrated in full above). Alternating winged messengers holding staffs, and frontal human figures standing on balsa rafts (?). Classic Tiahuanaco. Coyungo, Rio Grande Valley, Peru. About A.D. 900. Textile Museum 1965.32.1. On view in the Ancient Peruvian Textiles Exhibition through April 15, 1967.

DRAWINGS by Milton Franklin Sondag, Jr.

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